

THOUGHTS ON THE CRISIS IN MALI

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The Tuareg rebellions

Since Mali's independence, the Tuaregs have rebelled several times against the government which led to cruel battles and considerable sacrifices on both sides (Boukhars 2012, 4-5). The first uprising broke out in 1966, because the northerners – including the Tuaregs – gained none or only very limited positions in the new government, and they also did not fit into the socialistic modernization strategy implemented by the country's first president Modibo Keita.¹ The new leadership did not support the nomadic lifestyle and, similarly to the French, they tried to resettle those who followed this nomadic way of life (Bondersholt and Gyldenholm 2012, 4-5; Schraeder 2011, 180-181). The Tuareg lands were taken into state property and the government wanted to force them into cultivation by prohibiting roaming and grazing livestock, as well as forcing them to liberate their slaves. Uprisings by a part of the marginalized Tuaregs (the Iforas tribe) were brutally defeated by the government in almost two years. The government believed that it could handle the situation by military means, thus negotiations between the opposing parties were out of the question. About 1,000 Tuaregs lost their lives in these clashes and thousands more fled to Algeria and to neighboring countries (Keita 1998, 9-11; Humphreys and Mohamed 2003, 18). These events have not caught the attention of the international community yet, because it was then occupied with the developments in the Congo and Cyprus. After putting down the rebellion in 1968, a military coup replaced the previous government. The new president, Moussa Traoré, introduced military governance in the northern territories, where outsiders were not allowed to enter until 1987 and any means were allowed to suppress the Tuaregs' independence efforts.

Many young people emigrated to Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Libya due to their herds being devastated by

¹ The northern provinces: Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu constitute two-thirds of the country's territory, but only 10 percent of the total population lives here (see Boukhars 2012, 5).

the drought during the period between 1970 and 1987. In these countries, they lived in refugee camps for years (Ilahiane 2006, 40-41, 104-105). They formed the Azawadi and Adrar Tuareg Liberation Movement (Mouvement Touareg de Libération de l'Adrar et de l'Azawad) that aims at the creation of a Tuareg Azawad. The Tuaregs did not receive anything from the aid arriving into Mali; it was distributed in the more developed southern areas between government loyalists or stolen by particular ministers (Imperato 1996, 42-43). This is when the second Tuareg rebellion broke out, provoked by the imprisonment of some Tuaregs. This uprising was much better organized than the previous one and the rebels received almost unlimited support and modern Soviet small arms from Libya. The government responded brutally to the Tuaregs' initial success. A state of emergency was declared and an immediate attack was launched against the Tuaregs (Imperato 1996, 235-236). They slaughtered part of the Tuaregs' and other tribes' herds, which set northern Arabs against them and led to the escalation of the conflict. During the rebellion, 6-8,000 people lost their lives (Humphreys and Mohamed 2003, 3-4, 19-21). Finally, the government realized that it cannot quell the uprising by itself with its own armed forces, therefore, with the intermediation of the neighboring Algeria the opposing parties started negotiations and, on January 6, 1991, they concluded their first peace treaty - Accord de Tamanrasset - which had resulted in the immediate cessation of hostilities (Bondersholt and Gyldenholm 2012, 40; Ilahiane 2006, 119). Later however, the government respected only certain parts of the agreement (Lohman 2011, 6-7; Diallo 2008, 49). A military coup, led by Amound Toumani Touré, overthrew the former dictatorial regime on April 11, 1991 and the Tuaregs concluded their second treaty - Pact National - with the new government led by Alpha Oumar Konaré, which officially ended the rebellion. The Tuaregs who undertook the positions were integrated into the governmental army or were allowed to take public service (Schraeder 2011, 191-193). The atmosphere of mutual distrust remained and due to various misunderstandings the Tuaregs and the military repeatedly clashed with each other. This period lasted until 1996, when the third treaty - Flamme de la Paix - was concluded on March 27, after which the opposing parties actually ceased hostilities. By this time, the UN Refugee Agency resettled the Tuaregs who fled from the fights and the drought to refugee camps in Mauritania, back to Mali. The government started infrastructural investments in the North -

construction of schools and health care facilities, drilling wells, etc. - and began to provide greater autonomy for the Tuaregs who were now able to join Malian politics.

This period was concluded by the military coup led by Amound Toumani Touré in 2002. The observation of the agreements with the Tuaregs became less important for the new government, turning the Tuaregs marginalized again. In the fight against terrorism after 9/11, Mali, as a U.S. ally, announced a fight against terrorist organizations operating in the region, as well as against smugglers trading in weapons and drugs in the abandoned Saharan areas. The Tuaregs, being familiar with the desert, were front and center in these activities; therefore, the government forces launched several military operations against them, causing part of them to join Al-Qaeda (Lecocq and Schrijver 2007, 158-160; Diarra 2012, 7-8). The proliferation of small arms caused frequent clashes between the Tuaregs and their neighbors that have gotten bloodier over time. Despite this, the government did not pay sufficient attention to the region. Therefore, the fights escalated in 2006, when more Tuareg leaders of the Kel Adagh tribe deserted from the army and attacked Kidal and Meneka on May 23 (Lecocq and Schrijver 2007, 155-156). That day, the rebels established the Democratic Alliance of May 23 for Change (Alliance Démocratique du 23 Mai pour le Changement - ADC), that demanded the development of the northern areas and the implementation of the treaty signed in 1992. Mali requested the mediation of Algeria again; hence on July 4, 2006 they concluded the 4th peace treaty - Accord d'Algers – that was in fact the renewed version of the 2nd treaty (Boukhars 2012, 11). Similarly, they have pledged the development of the northern regions, the integration of Tuareg soldiers into the national army, and the withdrawal of the government forces to their southern positions. However, part of the rebels did not trust the government and they established the Tuareg Alliance of Northern Mali for Change (ATNMC), which continued the fight. Since the government did not have sufficient military force to crush the rebellion, they initiated peace talks again. They concluded the 5th agreement in Kidal in April 2009, which contained the implementation of the promises of the previous four treaties (Bondersholt and Gyldenholm 2012, 56).

It seemed that the government finally kept its promise. By December 2010, the army significantly reduced its garrison in the north and also set up a special Tuareg unit. In August 2011,

the government approved a program worth 65 million USD for development of the northern regions.² However, no significant changes occurred in the North. Smaller armed clashes took place between the government and the Tuaregs (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012, 6, 21, 35). It must be noted that none of the agreements has been able to eliminate the marginalization of the Tuaregs and to integrate them into the society, laying the foundation for another revolt.

The fourth Tuareg rebellion

This low-intensity conflict escalated on January 17, 2012, when the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) occupied the settlement of Aguelhok and launched a comprehensive attack on the government forces stationed in the north. The military coup, one month before the election, has aided the offensive and facilitated the disintegration of the poorly equipped, unpaid military units fighting against the Tuaregs, as well as that of the barely functioning government (Besenyő 2012). Starting from the Kati barracks, led by Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo,³ the coup established the National Committee for Reconstruction, Democracy and Restoration of the Statehood (CNRDR). The group of Sanogo rose up primarily against the military leadership's impotency, the corruption of the country's leadership, the corruptness and nepotism of the political elite, and because of the massacre in the northern garrison of Aguelhok (Boukhars 2012, 5; McGregor 2012). Even though the committee suspended the constitution, the rebels were not able to consolidate their power due to disorganization and other internal conflicts. The majority of the population rebuffed them, and they were not supported by the entire military, either. The social dialogue they started failed dismally and the army was forced to give up even more territory. The military takeover was not recognized by the international community which did not only protest against it, but also threatened the leaders of the coup with possible sanctions and military intervention. The African Union suspended Mali's membership and the representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) placed further pressure on the leaders of the coup to hand over the power to a civil transitional government until a new parliamentary election is held. They were forced to accept this. All participants in the

² Programme Spéciale pour la Paix, la Sécurité et le Développement au Nord-Mali.

³ Captain Sanogo was trained by U.S. Army and he is Lieutenant General of the Malian army from 14th august 2013.

coup were given amnesty, Amadou Toumani Touré and Sanogo resigned and withdrew from public life. The former spokesman of the parliament, Diounounda Traoré, was elected as the new president. However, the new government that stepped into office in August 2012 did not win the total support of the society and the atmosphere remained tense between the military and civil administration (Boukhars 2012, 7).

In early April, the various groups - MNLA, the Islamist Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith) group as well as other Arab militias - that launched an armed attack against the government, occupied the three northern regions: Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu. On April 5, 2012, the Tuaregs occupied the city of Douentza. The next day they have announced that they have reached their objectives and declared the Azawad Republic. They formed their government, which has not been recognized by the international community.

Gunmen involved in the fighting had been previously fighting in the mercenary army of the now toppled Libyan President Gaddafi. In late 2011, they fled to Mali along with their armed inventory and battle experiences (Besenyő and Marsai 2012, 92-93), where they launched an attack against the secular government almost immediately. These groups allied temporarily against the government forces and even collaborated with the local branch of al-Qaeda - the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). However, this alliance was vulnerable since the Tuaregs aimed for their own “secular” state; on the other hand, the Islamists imagined a country based on religion and Sharia law (Mouaki 2012). The Islamists started introducing this in the territories they have occupied; they destroyed hotels and restaurants – formerly places of alcohol distribution – and they mutilated several people because of various “offenses.” The Tuaregs did not agree with these extremist activities, but the Islamist organizations such as Ansar Dine, the Movement for Unity and for the Jihad for Western Africa (MUJAO) and the Nigerian Boko Haram, who are also present here, had more armed men and power than the Tuaregs (Arieff 2013). Soon the Tuaregs and the Islamists have also begun to fight each other.

The humanitarian situation deteriorated even further.

After the rebellion broke out in January 2012, more than 30,000 people fled from their residences within 3 weeks, followed soon by tens of thousands of others. The majority stayed in areas controlled by the government – mainly in Bamako and surrounding areas – and the rest in the neighboring countries of Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea, Togo and Algeria in improvised refugee camps. Several thousands of people remained in the North hiding in abandoned places, being too afraid to leave their small assets behind. Many were murdered trying to protect themselves and their families (McGregor 2012; Amnesty International 2012a).

Several charges were brought up against the various groups occupying the northern territories by the investigative team of the Human Rights Watch, reporting from the scene about the terrorization of civil society, raping of women and young girls, robbing, looting, brutalizing of captured government soldiers, and the use of child soldiers (Human Rights Watch 2012; Amnesty International 2012b). There is evidence that Tuareg and Islamist groups destroyed Christian buildings, and attacked Christian minorities living in the country. However, the Islamists did not spare the Muslim shrines either; such as the one located in Timbuktu – one of the World Heritage Sites – along with the 600-year-old entrance of the Sidi Jahya mosque (Marsai 2013). The introduction of sharia has not only destabilized the public law and order, but the accompanying executions, tortures and public flogging resulted in more refugees.

Since the outburst of the conflict, more than 420,000 people were forcibly displaced, with their supplies with the essentials unresolved (Arieff 2013). Part of the refugees remained in Mali, but more and more people have been fleeing into the neighboring countries. Of the 3.3 million people living in the north, the supplies for at least 1.76 million are not ensured as access to food is increasingly difficult with prices escalating since the outburst of the conflict (ECB Project 2012).

International reactions

Seeing the military successes and expansion of Islamists, the African Union called upon the UN Secretary General to endorse the immediate deployment of African troops with a UN Security Council resolution to prevent a “West-African Afghanistan” (Associated Press 2012). Representatives of the ECOWAS held extraordinary meetings agreeing that, if necessary, they would deploy organized forces - similarly as it was done in Liberia – to restore the legal order, prevent the country’s collapse and provide humanitarian aid to Mali and the surrounding states (McGregor 2012). The organization and the African Union asked for the intervention of the UN, seeking authorization to launch an armed intervention against the Islamists. The UN reacted positively to this request and the Security Council passed a resolution (2071) on October 12, 2012 about the occupying Islamist forces in Mali. Representatives of *Economic Community Of West African States* (ECOWAS) agreed on November 11, 2012 in Nigeria to send troops with the support of the UN to recapture the northern territories occupied by Islamists (ECB Project 2012). This was hard to realize, however, since the organization’s first plan to launch a military operation of 3,300 troops was rejected by the UN – they only approved planning, organization and gearing of troops and equipment gathering. Because of the escalation of the conflict, the UN Security Council finally approved resolution 2085 on December 20, 2012 to launch an African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), an intervention with one-year mandate. Of course it is questionable what this mission can achieve, since the ECOWAS already operates a military mission in Guinea-Bissau, where a coup occurred in April 2012. The Community has sent peacekeepers to the country to restore the civilian government, but the mission’s mandate is not clear, and no results have been demonstrated yet. Therefore, it is questionable if the Community can play an effective role in Mali. There was no consensus between the leaders of the neighboring countries, but after several discussions they consistently agreed to support the UN’s military intervention with an aim to restore Mali’s integrity.

Since 2002, the USA has been co-operating with the government on the “Pan Sahel Initiative” and on its successor,

the Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) anti-terrorism program (Lecocq and Schrijver 2007, 143-145; Diarra 2012, 20). The U.S. considered Mali its most important regional partner and a successful example of African democratization, and initially it has spoken cautiously about the conflict. At that time it did not want to admit that its Sahel policies have failed, since in three of the supported countries (Mali, Mauritania and Niger) military coups occurred in recent years. Even though the U.S. itself planned military intervention in the area, it never actually intervened because of the high risk involved (Tisdall 2013). Later, it joined the ECOWAS-led negotiations, and then it provided substantial humanitarian aid for the refugees, but still argued against military intervention (Arieff 2013). At the same time it increased substantially the military and training support provided for the fight against terrorism. Finally, due to the strengthening of AQIM and other militant Islamist groups – the U.S. does not consider these groups a regional, but a global threat – it has taken a limited role in the fight against these groups, supporting the neighboring states and initiated operations with logistical, reconnaissance and intelligence data, but it is not willing to send troops (Borger 2013).

After the proclamation of the breakaway Tuareg state, the European Union has instantly indicated that it does not support any action that would lead to the disintegration of Mali, and approved a plan in which European soldiers provide training and logistic support for government forces within the framework of a limited military operation. As far as the country's former colonizer, France, was concerned, Mali was still in its area of interest despite initial hesitation to intervene in the conflict due to the lack of a single point of view in the French government. It was only able to agree that it clearly rejected the Tuareg independence efforts and supported Mali's unity. Then, in several months of debate, the "hawks" prevailed and convinced the French president, Francois Hollande, to launch a limited military operation - "Opération Serval" - against the Islamist forces. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon supported this operation from the beginning, and on December 20, 2012, the UN Security Council passed resolution 2085, thus opening the way for the French intervention (Mann 2013).

The French military operations

The Islamists grew bored with the 2012 year-end stalemate and launched an armed intervention this January (2013) against Southwest Mali. A total of 1,200 armed men of the three militant groups occupied the cities of Konna and Mopti, and already posed a threat to the strategically important city of Sévaré.⁴ The country's demoralized army was unable to stop their offensive and, as a result, the alarmed government in Bamako called on the former colonial keeper, France, for military intervention, and declared a state of emergency on January 13, 2013.

Subsequently, France launched the military operation known as "Opération Serval" on January 11, 2013 to stop the attack, to ensure the protection of the capital, Bamako, and to help restore the country's unity. The operation, according to Admiral Edouard Guillaud,⁵ and French official statements, will only last till Mali and the arriving AFISMA troops are able to take effective action against the extremists. The question is: what if the Africans fail in Mali, similarly to Burundi and Darfur? Will the French remain in Mali or will they entrust Mali's fate to the luck of the Africans? They will likely remain - as it has probably been decided already in early January with the decision to intervene. An important factor was that although they did not have any units in Mali, but had nearly 3,500 soldiers in the surrounding states, stationed in the framework of various bilateral agreements (Besenyő and Hetényi, 2011).

The first attack against the extremists was launched by the 4th helicopter regiment in the region of Sevan, where an armed military convoy was stopped. The next day, several hundred French soldiers joined Mali's military units in the attack against the Islamists, who a couple of days earlier occupied the city of Konna. Here they also eliminated one of commanding positions of Ansar Dine. The news coverage reported falsely then that the city was recaptured, since the disorganized, poorly equipped and trained Malian army was unable to take advantage of the French air strikes. The government finally gained control of the city on January 18. On the same day, French fighter jets also bombed Douentza, Lere, Gao and Kidal, where they destroyed fighting positions and logistical storages (fuel and weapons).

⁴ This is the only city besides Bamako where heavy transport aircrafts are able to land, which is essential for the effective management of the humanitarian situation in the North or the execution of successful peace enforcement and support operation.

⁵ Admiral Edouard Guillaud is the French Chief of the Defence Staff, he synchronizes the operation in Mali, and the operative commander since 24th January 2013 is Grégoire de Saint-Quentin.

The helicopters and fighter jets involved in the operation came from the French military bases in Chad and Burkina Faso. In the first two days of “Opération Serval” at least 100 radicals died, compared to only a couple of losses of the French-Malian units (BBC 2013b; Mann 2013). The radical groups launched a counterattack towards Bamako and occupied the city of Diabaly, but due to the increased volume of French air strikes they began to retreat not only from the central areas, but also from Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. Nevertheless, the French became more cautious, as they were surprised by the training, organization and determination of the Islamists equipped with modern arms.

It was worth exercising caution, since the different armed groups often hid amongst the civilian population, whom they used as a human shield during the attacks, making it very difficult to differentiate fighters from civilians, resulting in more civilian deaths during the fights (Chrisafis 2013). Nevertheless, the French advance continued unhindered. On January 16 they attacked and recaptured first Markala, then on January 21 Diabaly and Douentza. At the same time the French reached the towns of Niono and Sevan and continued the air strikes, in which the Islamists fleeing from their position in Kidal lost several vehicles. On January 26, the French special units occupied Gao’s strategically important positions (the airport and the Wabary bridge) and recaptured the entire city in a few hours. Meanwhile, from Diabaly towards Lere and Timbuktu, the French launched a unit of 600 troops that the Islamists tried to impede with smaller ambushes. After being replaced by the 21st Marine regiment and troops arriving from Chad and Niger, the French who captured Gao advanced almost immediately towards Timbuktu, whose extremist occupiers also retreated by January 28. On the same day, the MNLA militants occupied Kidal, Tessalit and Khalil which had been left to their faith previously by militants of Ansar Dine. The French troops reached Kidal on the night of January 29, occupying the city without a fight (BBC 2013a). After that, the surviving extremists fled to their hideouts in the desert or tried to flee to the surrounding countries. If they want to completely eliminate the extremists and prevent them from returning to Mali the French and their allies have to prepare for desert operations where their air and technical superiority is not as evident. This is clearly not a very appealing prospect for the French political and military leadership who intend to minimize any losses.

In the French operation, logistical and intelligence support is provided by the U.S. (it operates an air bridge with C-17 military transport aircraft between France and Bamako, and also provides information collected by satellites and drones) and the U.K. (2 C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft, trainers and consultants, a special unit and reconnaissance aircrafts), while Canada, Germany, Italy, the United Arab Emirates, Spain, Belgium, Sweden and Denmark provide logistical support. Interestingly those states – Italy, Spain – that are the main destinations of drugs and illegal immigration originating from Mali, do not participate with troops in the operations, and the support they have provided so far is not substantial (Applebaum 2013).

Most of the international community considered it necessary and accepted the military intervention, but several of the opponents talk about a French recolonization of the country. This is contradicted by the fact that the majority of Mali's population welcomed the French soldiers, whom they have been waiting for to expel the Islamic extremists. On the whole, the Muslim world's reaction is mixed with countries welcoming and some even supporting the intervention, such as the United Arab Emirates, but many protesting against the "crusaders", and demanding their immediate withdrawal from Mali. So far these opinions were not able to seriously affect Operation Serval in which the French have been demonstrating considerable professionalism with minimal losses (7 soldiers).

The UN operation

In this operation, the African states have offered 3,500 soldiers and financial, logistical and intelligence support is expected from Western (European) states. According to the UN plan, the troops would arrive by September, but the international community was putting increased pressure on the African states to start the operation as soon as possible (Tran 2013). The lead country of the operation, Nigeria, indicated that even if the African teams arrived earlier to Mali, their training and installment would take considerable time, so they would not be ready for immediate deployment. Some have also questioned the African soldiers' effectiveness in the desert as they come from an entirely different environment - rainforests and savannah - and are less

familiar with desert warfare (Morgan 2013; Abderrahmane 2012).⁶ Attention must also be paid to the fact that Islamists are equipped with better weapons than the African units whose mandate is only for one year. Nigeria, the country with the best trained troop contingent, has to realize that domestic support for its intervention in Mali is not absolute, and the activity of Boko Haram is also intensifying in the country. Because of its internal security problems it may even order its soldiers back, but this could also happen in the case other African countries do the same. Perhaps this was also the reason for negotiation attempts with the opposing groups, but in the end they could not avoid military intervention. On January 18-19, the first 260 African soldiers (Nigeria, Togo and Benin) arrived to Bamako, but did not participate in the operations yet. According to the preliminary agreements, Chad offered 2,000 soldiers,⁷ while Nigeria 1,200 (Doyle 2013), Togo 540, Niger 1,200, Senegal and Burkina Faso 500 and 500 each, Benin 300, Guinea 150, and Ghana 120 soldiers to the AFISMA unit established by the ECOWAS.

Inspired by the French success, a meeting was held organized by the West African States on January 19 in the city of Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire,⁸ as well as Chad's President Idriss Deby, the French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius and the representatives of the U.S., the EU, Great Britain, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Burundi, Canada, Egypt, Italy, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia. The participants also agreed that Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone would start assembling their troops in Mali (PANA 2013). The member states requested immediate financial and logistical support from the UN. However, the UN Secretary-General supports this request only if the mission's logistic supply is provided rather by other countries in the framework of bilateral agreements. The U.N. would take over this activity only in the stabilization period after all military operations are concluded. In fact, according to the UN Secretary-General, the organization would be unable to perform its regional tasks if its employees became the target of AQIM and other terrorist organizations (Nichols and Charbonneau 2013).

In a donor conference held in Addis Ababa on January 29, the western states offered 455 million USD to support the operation of AFISMA (Donors' Conference on Mali 2013). This amount is intended to finance the rebuilding, training, and equipment of

⁶ With these viewpoints I agree as well, as in 2005 I served as a military advisor appointed by the European Union in the AMIS (African Union Mission in Sudan) peacekeeping mission in Darfur, where, for similar reasons, the African troops suffered many casualties in clashes with local armed groups.

⁷ Chad sends a mechanized artillery regiment of 1200 soldiers and two logistics battalions of 400 soldiers into Mali, but not under African, but French command. Later the Chadians were 2250. - TV5/Le Monde cf.: <http://maliactu.net/tchad-le-parlement-vote-le-retrait-des-soldats-du-mali-dans-un-delai-raisonnable-2/>

⁸ These are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

the Malian army. According to the African Union, this amount will not be sufficient to operate AFISMA; they estimate the costs at about 950 million USD (BBC 2013a). So will the international community provide financing, and will the Africans succeed and stabilize the region? We will only be able to see after the withdrawal of French troops.

Conclusion

The question is not whether the military operation will be successful, but how the winners would like to consolidate and rebuild Mali's northern areas. The country's all-time leadership must understand that violent and discriminative former methods cannot "modernize" the Tuareg society because they create a permanent conflict situation. Due to their historical experiences, the Tuaregs treat the government authorities with distrust. This is why the government needs to find a new approach to remedy the problems of the northern region – and of the Tuaregs in it – as well as to create a constructive dialogue. This may include a limited autonomy, or the transformation of the government structure, or even the creation of a stable, functional federal state in which the ethnic groups would have greater autonomy and political representation. This would require a reliable government in Bamako that enjoys the support of all segments of society. If this is not realized, then Mali should prepare in advance to the next and subsequent Tuareg uprisings.

Luckily, there are political forces that have realized the importance of these tools. If the influence of these forces increases, they could put the policy of reconciliation into practice. The representatives of the MNLA and the Malian government have already signed a peace treaty in the capital of Burkina Faso in June 2013. The compromise can be attributed mainly to the pressure put on the opposing sides by the ECOWAS and France. Due to the agreement, Mali's unity has been restored for now, it remains a secular state, and elections will be held.

After the reconstruction of the country, regional cooperation also needs to be improved in which the international community should take an active part. They need to work together with the local countries to eradicate the weapon and drug smuggling in

the area and create programs for nomads to replace their income from these activities. They then need to establish and effectively implement a country-wide disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program in which they disarm the various groups, with special attention paid to child soldiers recruited by Islamists. At the same time they need to continue training and equipping the forces of the Sahel countries, so they will be able to themselves effectively take action against the smugglers and extremists. The armed forces should be excluded from politics and used only for military, border patrol and other professional activities. The Islamists who had fled present yet another problem; where will they “exploit” their military experience gained in Mali and elsewhere? In how much time will they be able to reorganize their groups to cause problems in other West African countries where the West has significant political and economic interests? When will they be able to carry out terrorist acts, either in France or in other European countries that are involved in the operations? Considering the events of previous years, the Western world must be prepared.

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